

LEARNING GUIDE

DEMENTIA: SUPPORTING SLEEP

AOC17066-B-R-GN



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learning

Refer to this guide whilst watching the video. It contains additional useful information.

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Course Description

People living with dementia can experience **difficulty sleeping during the night** and this can have a negative impact on their health and well-being.

This course explores strategies to support a person to sleep. It explains how **sleep patterns and routines** change as people get older, and how people living with dementia are particularly effected.

The course presents practical strategies you can use to **assist those you support to get to sleep**, with a focus on providing person-centred care, to ensure the person feels supported.

Learning Outcomes

After viewing this course, participants should be able to:

- ▶ Explain the effects dementia may have on a person's ability to sleep.
- ▶ Outline strategies to support a person with dementia to sleep.

BEFORE YOU START



Did You Know?

- ▶ Dementia causes changes in the way a person experiences the world. **No two people experience dementia in the exact same way**, so what needs to be done to support them to sleep will not be the same.
- ▶ Up to **50% of people** with dementia have difficulty sleeping.
- ▶ Good sleep is important for people with dementia because it **improves their daytime function**.
- ▶ **Do not force a person to be in bed** or to sleep if they really want to be awake at night. They need an accepting environment that helps them feel safe.

Source: <https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/pdfs/Dementia-and-Sleep.pdf>

Meet the SME

Associate Professor, Colm Cunningham

is Director of The Dementia Centre, **HammondCare**, with an Australian and International team of over 200 staff. The centre's priorities are building design, understanding the causes of behaviour, life engagement, models of care and end of life care. Colm has published extensively and has over **30 years experience in older age care**. Colm is a Conjoint Associate Professor at the University of NSW in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine and a Visiting Fellow in Dementia Design.



Professor Colm Cunningham
Director of the Dementia Centre, HammondCare

SLEEP

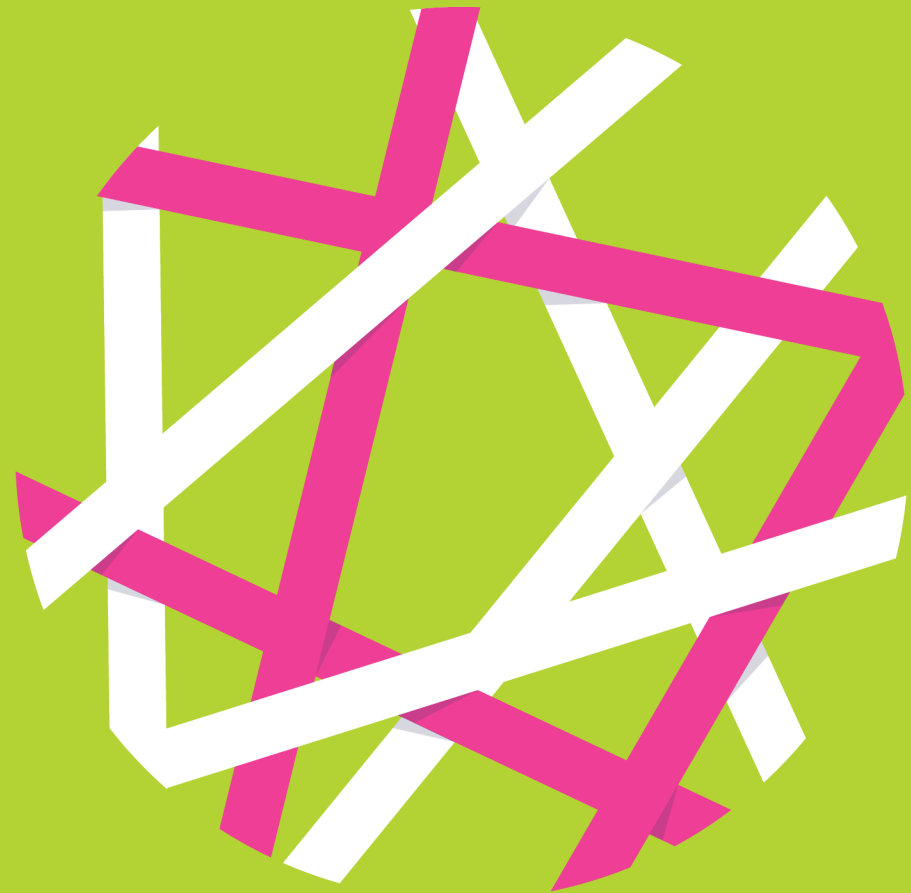
There are generally **4 stages of sleep**, that together form a 90-minute cycle that repeats through the night.

The third stage is the deepest part of sleep when **energy is restored** and hormones are released for growth and development.

The REM stage (4th stage), when **people dream**, initially occurs about 90 minutes after falling asleep and recurs about every 90 minutes, getting longer later in the night.

This means that **when a person has their sleep interrupted** it can take up to 90 minutes for them to return to the sleep period of full rest and recovery.

Our circadian rhythm is our daily sleep/wake cycle. It controls your timing of sleep and cause you to be sleepy at night and your tendency to wake in the morning without an alarm. **It affects a wide variety of functions**, from daily fluctuations in wakefulness to body temperature, metabolism, and the release of hormones.



GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP



Sleep and the Older Person

Most people sleep between 7 and 9 hours each day. However, they may not get all their sleep at night.

Around 4 in 10 older people have at least one 30-minute nap every day.

Most people over the age of 80 nap for more than one hour each day.

At night, some older people take more than half an hour to get to sleep. This is the case for about 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men.

Older people also tend to sleep lightly.

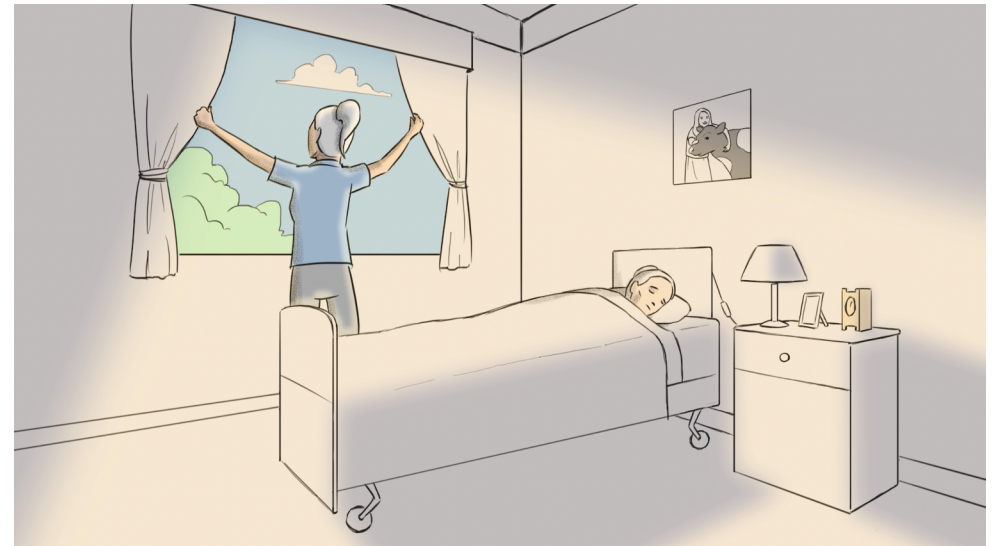
They wake up more often and spend less time in deep, refreshing sleep.

Lack of Sleep

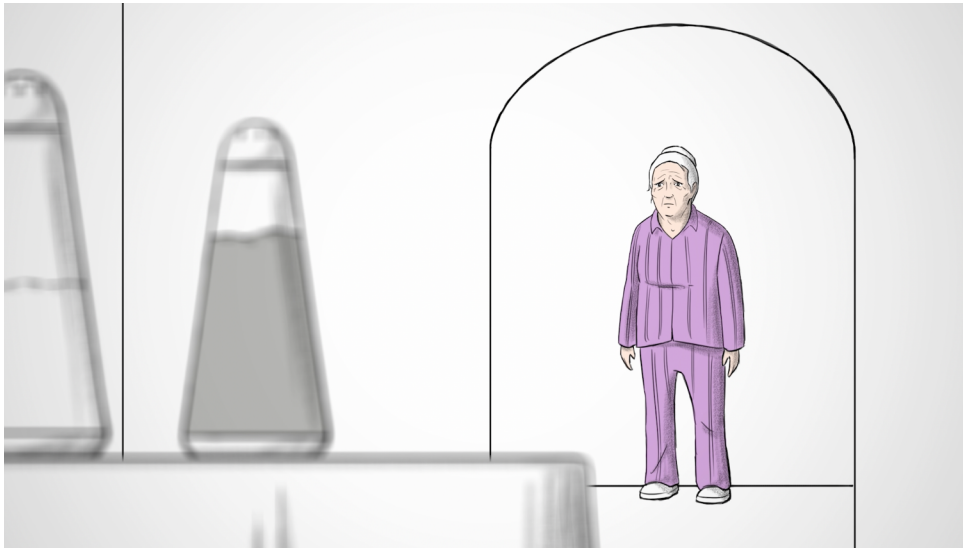
Sleep deprivation weakens the ability of the part of the brain that handles **reasoning and emotional responses**, and makes it difficult to concentrate and form new memories.

When we stay awake all night, or significantly cut sleep short, **the body does not release the hormones necessary to regulate growth and appetite** and instead forms an overabundance of stress chemicals.

Sleep-deprived people are more likely to report increased feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy, powerlessness, failure, low self-esteem, poor job performance, conflicts with co-workers, and reduced quality of life.



DEMENTIA AND SLEEP



Dementia is associated with sleep and **circadian rhythm disturbances**. People living with dementia will experience **poorer sleep quality** than normally comes with ageing.

A disrupted circadian rhythm leads to **increased agitation and confusion in the evening**, as well as difficulty sleeping at night.

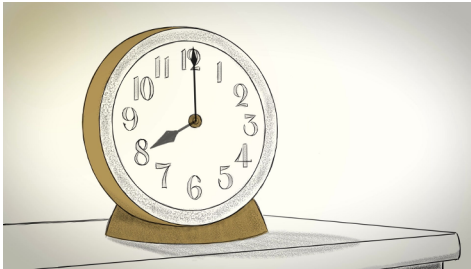
In Alzheimer's Disease and Fronto-temporal dementia (FTD), 44% of people are affected by a sleep disorder, and **the prevalence and severity of sleep disorders increase with dementia severity**.

Lewy Bodies Disease (LBD) has the highest prevalence of sleep and circadian disturbances of any dementia, affecting approximately 90% of people with LBD.

This is all due to various changes in the brain; however, **there are additional factors that contribute to sleep disturbances for people with dementia**.



KEY DEFINITIONS



Circadian Rhythm

An internal 24-hour clock, running in the background of your brain and cycles between sleepiness and wakefulness. It's also known as your sleep/wake cycle. Outside factors like lightness and darkness can impact your circadian rhythm. 'Circa-dian' = 'about a day'



Sleep Routine

A variety of different practices to assist people to achieve quality night-time sleep and full alertness during the day. It is important to acknowledge if the sleep routine of a person prior to entering care included being wakeful at night (e.g. shift workers). Therefore, it is important that these people are supported to be awake at night whilst receiving the same care options.



Sundowning

When people with dementia become more confused, restless or insecure late in the afternoon or early evening.

Visual Cue

A phrase, picture or object within view, to prompt or to trigger the person's memory (e.g. care workers wearing pyjamas act as a visual that it is night time).

RESOURCES

[Sleep Foundation \(Sleep Habits and Dementia\)](#)

[Sleep Health Foundation \(Ageing and Sleep\)](#)

DISCLAIMER:

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